ENGLISH-SPEAKING ORIENTALISTS

A critique of their approach to Islam

and Arab Nationalism

by

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(1)

There is scarcely an academic pursuit, in the realm of the humanities, which has more unfortunate antecedents than Islamic and Arabic studies in the West. It is no purpose of this paper to go into details of its sad history. Suffice it, therefore, to give below a mere synoptic view of that history in very rough outline to serve as a general introduction to our limited subject.[1]

From the beginning, the roots of Judaeo-Christian hostility to Islam were seen in the Quran. The "People of the Book" were quick not only to deny but to challenge Muhamad's role as the

[1] Oriental studies in the Islamic and Arabic fields are, of course, an international discipline built up by Western Orientalists: English, French, German, Italian and other. This critique may generally apply to most of them; its limitation to English-speaking Orientalists is merely for convenience of treatment. Even within this limited scope only those scholars with published views bearing directly on the specific themes of the critique are mentioned.

bearer of a divine message, and thus began a chain of polemics that continued, parading under different banners, almost to our own times. With the political and military actions of the Islamic state under Muhammad and his successors the hostility was extended from the confines of Arabia to embrace the Byzantine Empire, and later still Western Christendom.

The Byzantine polemicists were not ignored by triumphant Islam, nor did it neglect to reciprocate their venomous effusion. But the Byzantines were in due course even surpassed by their medieval European sucessors in cultivating hatred and prejudice through the dissemination of abusive and false accounts. Thus to them Islam was "the work of the devil," the Quran "a tissue of absurdities" and Muhammad "a false prophet," "an impostor" or "antichrist." The Muslims were some sort of brutes with hardly any human qualities.

To what extent such propaganda conditioned Western Europe to respond to the call for the Crusades is hard to determine. But one of the most spectacular, and paradoxically less obvious failures of this long contest between Christendom and Islam is that it did not induce Christendom, despite close and prolonged contact with Islam in the Holy Land and the neighboring countries, to soften its prejudices or at least to correct its factual image of the enemy. Two centuries of strife ended with both sides even more hostile to one another, and not less prejudiced or ignorant.

But the Crusades had a chastening influence on Christendom. Instead of attempting to regain former Christian territory by force of arms, instead of fighting the "Saracen," a new approach had gradually been gaining recognition. Thus Francis of Assisi sought, through missionary persuasion, to evangelize the "infidel," and Raymond Lull, with similar motives in mind, was instrumental in the introduction of the teaching of Arabic in Christian institutions of higher learning.[2] But the aim was still largely destructive, hostile: to know more about Islam so as to be better equipped to expose its "defects." Indeed, Peter the Venerable who patronized the first Latin translation of the Quran was himself the writer of a vehement polemic against Islam.[3]

No appreciable advance towards a better understanding is discernible until comparatively recent times. The first serious attempts, such as they were, were overshadowed by renewed fighting. Both the Christian reconquest of Spain and the Ottoman penetration deep into Europe seem to have rekindled the flames of hatred and prejudice and retarded the possibility of fair representation. The old world was as divided as ever between the "abode of Islam" and "the abode of war," and the twain could never meet except on the battlefield or in the pages of squalid polemics.

And yet meet they did. For meanwhile two great historical developments took place. First, there had developed in Western Europe certain forces which culminated in the fifteenth-century Renaissance, and had called for the translation of Greek science from Arabic physicians, mathematicians, philosophers, etc. Although this "scientific" contact was prolonged and profound,

[2] The Council of Vienne held in 1312 directed that Arabic, among certain other languages, should be introduced at the Universities of Paris, Bologna, Oxford, Salamanca and the Roman Curia. See H. Radshall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1895), II, pt. 1, 30, 81-82, 96, who states (p. 30): "The objects of the measure were purely missionary and ecclesiastical, not scientific."

[3] Cf Emile Dermenghem, *La Vie de Mahomet* (Paris, 1929), 136; R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Harvard University Press, 1962), 37.

it does not seem to have greatly influenced the doctrinal, theological or even historical image of Islam in Christian eyes.

Secondly, the unity of Christendom under the Church was disrupted by new political, economic and religious forces. There merged from th upheaval of the Reformation national, often rival, states, some of which entertained ambitious schemes of overseas expansion. Once more there was a violent conflict with Islam. But these new smaller nation-states tended to seek to advance their own interests irrespective of the interests of other Christian states or Christendom as a whole. And this was the practical beginning of closer diplomatic and commercial relations with the lands of Islam than were ever possible before.

Although the religious polemicists were still as bitter and active as ever, although the missionary aim was increasing its hold on the imagination of ecclesiastical authorities, new secular motives had now been recognized as equally, if not more. valid. For the purpose of this paper, the change is perhaps exemplified in the statement formulated by the academic authorities of the University of Cambridge in connection with the founding of the chair of Arabic. In a letter dated May 9, 1636, addressed to the founder of the chair they state: "The work itself we conceive to tend not only to the advancement of good literature by bringing to light much knowledge which as yet is locked up in that learned tongue, but also to the good service of the King and State in our commerce with the Eastern nations, and in God's good time to the enlargement of the borders of the Church, and propagation of Christian religion to them who now sit in darkness." [4]

[4] Quoted by A. J. Arberry, *The Cambridge School of Arabic* (Cambridge, 1948), p. 8. Spelling has been modernized.

But it must be acknowledged that any Arabic or Islamic studies that were cultivated for any of these reasons—polemic, missionary, commercial, diplomatic, scientific, or academic—continued for a long time to be coloured by some measure of the same deep-rooted animosity. Indeed, the very first holder of the chair of Arabic at Cambridge planned, even though he never completed, a refutation of the Qur'an.One of this early successors in the eighteenth century wrote a pioneering *History of the Saracens,* but also recommended that the Qur'an should be read in order to contradict or refute it. Thus increased knowledge seems to have made little headway to dispel a tradition that developed in the course of centuries.

Nor was the situation improved by new historical developments. The expansion of Europe overseas embraced, in the course of time, large areas of the lands of Islam, and a climax was reached in the nineteenth century when Europe became master of extensive Muslim territory inhabited by many millions of Muslims. Political domination was accompanied, or followed, by more subtle cultural subordination. The fortunes of the Muslim world had reached a very low ebb and the future of its civilization was to a great extent in the hands of Christian powers. [5]

Under the new dispensation secular education struck root and missionary work among the Muslims became possible. Secular education and Christian missions between them tended to

[5] Cf. *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society 1882-83,* p. 57: "... The Egyptian campaign and the dominant influence it has given to England over the destinies of the country much enhance the responsibility of English Christians to give Egypt the Gospel of Christ."

foster at least a sceptical attitude to the Muslim way of life.[6] Both the "empirebuilder", the Christian gentleman, and the "ambassador of Christ", the Christian missionary, came to exert direct or indirect influence on the course of education in Muslim lands. These two classes of workers, to be sure, supplied a number of the new Arabic (or Persian or Turkish) and Islamic specialists, the forerunners of the academic Orientalists.

The way was also more safely open to the curious traveler, the leisurely romantic and rich connoisseur who wrote rather shallow books about the Orient, acquired antiques or collected manuscripts. But through this tangle the figure of the disinterested scholar is discernible, for example in the indefatigable E. W. Lane.[7] Of all these types, at least the missionary was convinced that if the political power of Islam could be so thoroughly shaken, spiritual collapse and eventual conversion to Christianity were near at hand.

Such were the forecasts when British (and other) missionary societies commenced operating in the East, in Afrika and the Mediterrranean lands. From the beginning there were, if not an affinity of aims, at least some mutual sympathy and active cooperation between the academic Orientalist and the evangelizing missionary. In England this was particularly true of the Arabists at the two ancient universities where Arabic was

[6] Cf. Dr. Muhammad al-Bahiy's introduction to Shaikh Mahmud Shaltut's *Al-Islam Aqidatun wa-Sharica* (Al-Azhar Press, 1370/1959), pp. III and V.

[7] Lane was greatly assisted in his lexicography by an Azhar shaikh, Ibrahim Dasuqi, who was a *musahhih at the Bulaq Press.* See A. A. Paton, *History of the Egyptian Revolution* (London, 1870), II, 270, quoted by J. Heyworth-Dunne, "Printing and Translation under Muhammad Ali of Egypt" in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (July, 1940), 345.

cultivated as an aid to theological and biblical studies by scholars who were themselves usually in holy orders. Thus both McBride of Oxford and Lee[8] of Cambridge worked for the Church Missionary Society on a "Protestant" translation of the Gospels and Psalms into Arabic.

The loose alliance between the two sides was continued throughout the nineteenth century and, in a sense, down to the days of Margoliouth at Oxford well into this century. It has never been dissolved. To be sure, both sides learned to revise their objectives and methods. But somehow there persisted an undercurrent of common thought—perhaps now largely unconscious—that Islam might be transformed through "westernization," or "modernization." The missionary prayed, and the Orientalist speculated, and both wrote and continue to write, with varying degrees of subtlety and insight on the subject.

The discussion has now been narrowed down to Great Britain, and that is purposely to suit the subject of the paper. But oriental studies in Great Britain, as in other countries, were in some way related to the development of the humanities in European universities as it affected the "scientific" study of history in general and the "academic" approach to Islam in particular. English, French and German scholars, as well as scholars from other nations, contributed greatly to Arabic and Islamic studies through teaching, writing and publication of texts. Their combined efforts created conditions favorable to the adoption of a detached, disinterested and truly academic approach to Islam.[9]

[8] Samuel Lee was educated at Queen's College with a scholarship from the Church Missionary Society, according to the C.M.S. *Committee Minutes,* II, 91, 349.

[9] For a historical survey see J. Fuck, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1955).

There is no doubt that considerable advance towards this goal has been made. But there is also little doubt that the goal has not yet been reached by a considerable number of contemporary students of Islam, those who have died recently and those who are still alive. Their work divides itself into two distinct departments: editing of texts and analytical studies. Details will be given below. But here it may be stated, in a summary fashion, that English-speaking students of Islam—and from now on the discussion will be restricted to them—have been less scholarly objective in their studies than in their publication of texts. Instances of insufficient scientific detachment are not lacking even in the editing or translating of certain texts, where the subject lends itself to the ventilation of those "fixed ideas" about Islam which still exist in the minds of certain Western scholars. [10]

It may be considered unusual for a paper like this to concern itself with living Orientalists rather than with those of the past. But if it is an accepted custom to review a book by a living author soon after its publication, and to quote it later on with approval or disapproval, surely it is a legitimate pursuit to inquire into any author's contributions in part or as a whole, particularly if they are on subjects of vital interest. The living, not the dead, are capable of reflecting on the consequences of their published ideas. That is one of the objects of this study: to remind some scholars of the impact of their ideas on the Muslim mind in this scientific age.

A word of warning must now be given. The following analysis, the fruit of long and careful study and reflexion, is not conceived in any spirit of controversy. It must not be mistaken for an apology for any creed, religious or national. It is offered simply as a sincere contribution to a better understanding of an old problem. The writer believes that on the whole old prejudices, greatly diminished since the dawn of this century, are still strong and widely disseminated by some Arabic and Islamic scholars in the West. Moreover, he fears that "religious" prejudices have more recently been reinforced by new "national" prejudices. There is evidence that the feeling of hatred long reserved for Islam has now been extended to the Arabs or more particularly Arab nationalism. It is idle to speculate, but this feeling may develop, on medieval patetrns, to such a degree that it may prove disastrous to Oriental scholarship and human relations alike. Genuine concern for both prompts the following discussion.

[10] Cf. section 3 below.

(2)

Some contemporary English-speaking Orientalists—and this generic term is from now on used to cover not only those in Great Britain but also those in North America—came to the study of Islam via biblical or theological studies, and indeed a number of them are at present in holy orders. Others found themselves in this department of study in consequence of accident of residence, missionary or military service in an Islamic country. Others still—and this is perhaps more true of the younger generation—chose to study Islam deliberately as a career. If we were to describe in a word the kind of training they have received, it would be generally correct to say that, apart from theological background in certain cases, most of them have had linguistic or literary training, and that very few among them are trained historians. One or two have recently made rather experimental ventures in the vague realms of sociology and psychology.

This is perhaps one of the most serious handicaps. Many of the studies on Islam written by English-speaking Orientalists are distinguished by erudition, but if one penetrates beneath the apparatus of the learned footnotes and the array of sources one is bound to detect an alarming degree of speculation, guess-work and passing of judgment for which little or no concrete evidence is produced. It is, of course, one thing to be skilful in decpiering documents in Arabic (or Persian or Turkish) and quite another to be able to integrate the material culled therefrom into a historical contribution in the accepted professional

sense. History in general is one of the most vulnerable of disciplines to the invasion of people from outside; it is often assumed that anyone who wields a pen can write history. In Islamic courses, the linguistic, literary and historical materials are so intertwined that scholars are prone to attempt too much and find themselves writing history, almost unconsciously, with scant qualifciation for the task. Hence it is easy to know why the subject of Islam has been far better treated by the few "historians" among the Orientalists than by the majority who are linguists.

In the following discussion we shall take a few of the "fads" in the works of Orientalists which seem to fall short of scientific historical standards. But to keep the discussion within manageable limits we shall restrict our attention to the Arabists. There is no question of ascribing polemic or open missionary motives to any one of them. All of them are taken as engaged in an academic activity which should be its own justification and reward. Of course Orientalists train, in the normal course of their duties, diplomatists, missionaries and businessmen, in addition to perpetuating their kind by training their successors in teaching and research. Hence the added significance and relevance of whatever ideology they may hold. It is precisely the ideology as revealed in published works that we propose to examine with a view to pointing out where, in our opinion, the accepted canons of scientific investigation have not been strictly observed.

Perhaps the most significant matter in which the rules of the game are often disregarded is the conception which most Orientalists entertain of the role of Muhammad as a messenger of God and the nature of the message, enshrined in the Quran, which he was commanded to convey. To the community of Islam,

Muhammad is the last of God's messengers to mankind sent to confirm and complete earlier messages conveyed through former prophets. To the community the Quran is the Speech of God, eternal and uncreated, transmitted to Muhammad, at intervals, through the agency of the angel Jibril. Not only the message itself but also the call to preach it is of divine origin.

Any writer, even though he be not a believing Muslim, who fails to take note of these beliefs in what he writes about Islam runs the risk of exposing himself to the charge of lack of objectivity. In writing on the subject, a fair way would be to state the Muslim view in its entirety so fully and clearly as to leave no room for complaint of misrepresentation. If the writer holds another view, or if he wishes to refer to still other views, he would be fully justified in introducing all this, separately and distinctly, after he had stated the traditional Muslim view.

But unfortunately this logical and natural order of representation is seldom followed and is often inverted, with the result that unless he is well instructed the reader will, in effect, be subjected to some "indoctrination" or at least to such confusion that he will be unable to distinguish between native tradition and the opinion of the writer. For many Orientalists, assuming in others the great learning they themselves possess, often neglect to observe such simple elements of scientific treatment of historical questions. They assert, for example, that the Quran is Muhammad's own composition.[11] Then they proceed to base on this assertion far-reaching judgments, historical, theological, literary, etc., which by sheer repetition are elevated to the dignity of facts.

[11] See, however, H. A. R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism* (Oxford, 1950), 35-37, who quite clearly states the traditional Muslim point of view first before he proceeds to elaborate the view that the Quran is Muhammad's "utterances." A. J. Arberry, to take the other most perceptive of living English Orientalists, considers the Quran to be "a supernatural production," but he does not subscribe to the Muslim view that it is of divine origin. See *The Holy Koran* (London, 1953), 32.

This is perhaps one of the major factors, if not the major factor, in creating an attitude of suspicion, if not hostility, towards the work of Orientalists adopted by the *ulama* as well as by educated Muslims, including some who were trained in Western institutions or even under well-known Orientalists. Gone are the days when Orientalists used to write largely for the benefit of other Orientalists. Apart perhaps from specialized monographs, much of the present output is read and weighed by large numbers of scholars and intelligent readers in the West and perhaps even more of these in the Muslim world. In their present mood, after repeated polemic and missionary onslaughts against their faith, and prolonged Western political and cultural domination of their lands, the Muslims are more prone to take offense than ever before.

Offensive ideas never cease to be published, however. Surely the authors must be aware that it offends Muslim sentiment to brush aside the cardinal Muslim belief that Islam is of divine origin, and to suggest, whether obliquely or bluntly, that Muhammad had laid false claims to be the bearer of a divine message, and that the Quran itself is thus the composition of an impostor. It is more conducive to human understanding, and more scholary, to leave matters of faith alone, and to turn to more tangible pursuits in such fields as literature, art, and science which, despite the Orientalists' own efforts, still bristle with question marks? Surely it is possible for a Christian (or Jewish) Orientaliast, having a faith different from that of a Muslim, to

state the Muslim's conception of his religion in Muslim terms.[12] If he does so he will not only be more scientific, but he will place himself in a better position to comprehend Islam's manifestation in history.

The believing Muslim and the sceptical Orientalist are also poles apart with regard to the "origins" of Islam. Here again the views of the majority of Orientalists, English-speaking and otherwise, tend to create ill-feeling among Muslims, and in consequence place serious obstacles in the way of intellectual traffic between the two sides. For, having on the whole rejected the Muslim doctrine of the divine origin of Islam, and having moreover decided that Muhammad the man, and not any divine agency, was responsible for the composition of the Quran, the Orientalist has been busy, since the dawn of the scientific historical method, trying to discover Judaeo-Christian "origins" without reaching conclusive results beyond pointing out obvious "parallels" and in the process producing learned, if speculative, discourses on the obvious.

"Speculative" has been used with due consideration, for the following reason. Let us forget for a moment what the Muslims believe, and let us consider the problem as a purely historical one.[13] Granted, for the sake of argument, that the Quran is Muhammad's own composition. How is a student of history to

[12] Cf. a similar suggestion made by N. Daniel, *Islam and the West—The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh, 1960), 350

[13] An English bishop who was also a distinguished scientist, E. W. Barnes, *The Rise of Christianity* (London, 1948), has shown how deep-rooted is the origin of Christianity, and Judaism before it, in the ancient Near Eastern tradition of myth, legend and fact. The historian who holds that the Bible and the Quran are human documents may ask the Orientalist, speculating on the "Judaeo-Christian origins" of Islam, to note and reflect.

prove Muhammad's borrowing from previous sources? If by guesswork, then it is not profitable to spend time examining details; if by the rigor of strict historical discipline, then any evidence produced is worthy of serious attention. However, any contemporary evidence that may have existed and might have been used to support the Judaeo-Christian thesis is lost beyond recall.

Surely parallels cannot be accepted in lieu of what might have been conclusive evidence. Scraps, clues, inferences, intelligent guesswork are never satisfactory in this case and possibly in any case. It would therefore be highly imaginative to assume that Muhammad—who according to tradition was unable to read and write though in the scheme of things constructed by the Orientalists he was—sat down "in his study" to consult and "quote"[14] previous authors for the composition of the work known as the Quran. No doubt this is an exaggerated way of putting it, but this is in brief what the thesis proclaims in details.[15]

[14] Cf. A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford, 1955), 86: "a quotation from the Gospel"; 655: "an allusion to Matt. XXI, 33 f." See also W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society* (London, 1961), 262: "quotations from the Bible begin to appear in Muslim works..." All this when there was no Arabic Bible from which to "quote"!

[15] Cf. F. Rosenthal, "The Influence of Biblical Tradition on Muslim Historiography" in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (Oxford, 1962). While subscribing to the theory that the Quran is Muhammad's composition and that he derived at least its historical parts from "ultimate Judaeo-Christian origin," he is more careful than scholars holding similar views. He indicates a historical sense by the use of the word "ultimate," and mental neutrality by the warning against "speculation" and "preconceived ideas," even though by his acceptance of unproved hypotheses he somewhat succumbs to the same temptation. (See pp. 35-36 *et passim.*) The editors of this valuable collection of articles might have exercised more care in this matter. In their introduction (pp. 2, 11) they state that the Middle East "saw the birth of three of the

Parallels are very deceptive; they are not necessarily scientific proof of identity of two similar compositions, still less of conscious adoption by the successor from the predecessor. Both may be derived from a third common source. Indeed, a scholar who holds that the Bible and the Quran are human documents may be tempted, with good reason, to trace some of their contents in earlier Semitic traditions of the Near East. However, in order to prove actual adoption more convincing evidence than has hitherto been produced is necessary.

It was Vico who said that ideas are propagated by the independent discovery by each nation (or culture) of what it needs at any given stage in its development.[16] A leading Orientalist had said much the same thing, with illuminating elaboration, when he insisted that a borrowing culture—or in the present case simply religious system—must itself feel the need, through its own internal development, for external nourishment. Whatever it borrows in this way can be useful only if it is sustained by those elements in the native culture (or religion) which called for the borrowing. A living culture (or religion) rejects automatically all foreign elements which conflict with its own fundamental values.[17]

In the voluminous effusion about the "origins" of Islam there is, in the writer's opinion, no convincing evidence, in the historical sense, which proves that such a borrowing did in fact take place. On the contrary, the only surviving contemporary evidence is that of the Quran itself, and it rules out any such possibility in most categorical terms. It is surprising that this evidence is too often brushed aside. Thus an acute scholar, who has made valuable contributions to Islamic studies, has remarked that "Islam has always combined a capacity for absorption of foreign elements with a certain reluctance to admit their origin."[18]

This remark deserves to be examined even out of context, since it has already been quoted out of context. If by Islam is meant civilization or culture, then neither the fact of absorption of foreign elements nor their source has ever been denied.[19] On the other hand, if by Islam is meant its dogma and creed, the writer of that statement hardly needs a reminder that if Islam were to remove the cause of his complaint it would cease to be itself and would have to renounce the explicit teaching of its holy book. As a *faith*, Islam is of course indivisible; one has to take it or leave it as a whole.

This is one illustration among many where insufficient precision is only slightly concealed beneath catchy and therefore quotable phrases which lose their lustre on close examination. Even Orientalists who reconciled themselves to admitting the sincerity of Muhammad and to recognizing that he preached a fun-

great religions of humanity, Judaism and its two offspring, Christianity and Islam." See the discussion of this point in the opening remarks of section (3) below.

[16] Quoted in R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1951), 69, 71.

[17] H. A. R. Gibb, "The Influence of Islamic Culture on Medieval Europe" in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* (Manchester), XXXVIII (1955-56), 85-87.

[18] G. E. von Grunebaum, *Islam : Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition* (London, 1961), 228.

[19] Hence the validity of another remark made by von Grunebaum must be questioned. See "Problems of Muslm Nationalism" in R. N. Frye (ed.), *Islam and the West* (The Hague, 1957), 29 : "...Conservative pressure will force the concealment of the borowing wherever possible behind the veil of orthogenetic legend." Cf. further discussion of this matter in section (5) below.

damentally new religion, assert at the same time that his message was not wholly of divine origin. Here is a quotation from another scholar who has made valuable researches in the life of Muhammad. "Islam," he writes "would have to admit the fact of its origin—the historical influence of the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition."[20] Here the question of the "origins" is taken as settled and referred to as "fact" without any qualification or discussion.[21] To borrow the phraseology of the quotation one might say that its author would have to admit that he cannot have it both ways: to consider Muhammad as a sincere prophet and to impute dishonesty to him since he, the supposed author of the Quran, does not admit that he appropriated the ideas of another.

Such a duality of approach is bound to be self-contradictory; it is moreover unsatisfactory from either point of view of the problem, for it neither fully supports the one nor completely refutes the other. The faithful Muslim will still be consistent within his system; so also will the polemicist. But not the professed writer of history who attempts to ride two horses at the same time. Respectable as his attempt at a compromise may be, the result of his effort is frustrating to protagonist and antagonist alike, and not strictly acceptable to the neutral historian who has no axe to grind. Indeed, despite the advance made in the writing of scientific history, the new "dualists" in Islamic studies have produced contributions—distinguished in themselves—

[20] W. M. Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society* (London 1961), 263.

[21] Cf. B. Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (London, 1960), who in this short and undocumented volume might have used more guarded language when he wrote (p. 39): "...probably from Jewish and Christian traders and travellers whose information was affected by midrashic and apocryphal influences."

which proved less comprehensible than those of the extremists, whether believers or polemicists, whom they try, consciously or unconsciously, to supplant.

(3)

It is evident that the divergence between the meaning of Islam to its adherents and its image as drawn by Orientalists touches the very fundamentals of the Islamic faith. Despite the undoubted advance made towards an academic approach it is clear that, in this matter, the late medieval image of Islam remains substantially unaltered; it has only discarded old-fashioned clothes in favour of more modern attire. Illustrations of persistence of the old ideas abound, not only concerning the Quran and Muhammad but also quite logically concerning Islamic theology, law and history. It is neither desirable nor profitable to dwell more on the subject here. Instead we propose to consider it from another angle.

One of the results of Western penetration into the lands of Islam has been the exposure of the mind of the young, largely through secular education and missionary effort, to seductive arguments—patterned partly on those that had undermined faith in Christianity in Western Europe. But, unlike the method of the medieval polemicist, the new method had, to the missionary at any rate, the positive aim of conversion to Christianity. In its simplest form this is the method of the student of "comparative religion" who endeavors to compare Christianity with Islam, almost always to the disadvantage of the latter. This method of approach is still with us, even though it no longer professes open evangelical aims.

Here again it is more instructive to take concrete examples.

But some general principles may be stated first. The origin of comparative religious studies in the West is rooted in controversy. Judaism had already been compared with Christianity, but instead of promoting understanding the comparison engendered further hostility. Similar were the results of comparing Judaism and Christianity with Islam by those Jews and Christians who maintained that it was an offspring of the one or the other religion, or of both. While, however, there is between Judaism and Christianity an admitted organic relationship, there is no such admitted, or scientifically proved, relationship between either and Islam. Jewish and Christian hostility to it springs rather from political and doctrinal conflicts in history. It is a sad commentary on the collective wisdom of the learned among the adherents of these faiths that they never succeeded in removing the causes of their mutual hatred and discord, and Orientalists must accept a share in perpetuating this sad state of affairs.

Unless therefore the aims of comparative religion in the Islamic field are clearly defined, and unless some rules of the method of comparison are accepted by those who wish to engage in it, there is a risk that comparison may degenerate into fruitless controversy. It may be assumed that those who wish to undertake such pursuits harbour no polemic or missionary aims and that their chief interest is purely academic. If that is so, they will surely recognize that comparison requires tolerance, sympathy and respect in the one who undertakes it. For the principal aim is to deepen one's understanding of both his native culture (or tradition) and that of the other culture (or tradition) with which it is to be compared. Such understanding is bound to foster a critical approach not only to this other culture (or tradition) but also to one's own.

Therefore any matter that is to be studied comparatively must be stated in terms acceptable to those from whose tradition (or in his case religion) it is taken. It must also be related to its circumstances and judged according to the values of its own native system. If these elementary principles are accepted, then any writer who feels any hostility, repulsion or even contempt toward a foreign tradition should be considered—nay, he should honestly consider himself—as mentally and emotionally unfit to attempt a comparison which would contribute no tangible benefit to scholarship.

While mercifully none of the contemporary English-speaking Orientalists betrays such rancour and vindictiveness as disfigures, for example, the late Lammens' distinguished work, nevertheless some of those among them who attempt comparison betray here and there theological or doctrinal prejudices which tend to diminish the value of their contributions and to shake confidence in their scholarship.

At first sight Islam has some similarities to Christianity, but closer examination reveals fundamental differences. This fact has often irritated missionaries in the past, and still tempts a few in the academic world to chase such elusive hares as the "origins of Islam." Both the missionary and the academic scholar tended to forget, when directly or indirectly they abused Muhammad, how deeply pious Muslims venerate Jesus.

In a recent volume in the "Penguin Books," an Orientalist who is an Anglican clergyman sought, by numerous comparisons, to show that Islam was virtually an imperfect or distorted form of Christianity.[22] He has, however, given reason to justify

[22] A. Guillaume, *Islam* (1954), 192-96 *et passim.*

questioning his competence as an impartial judge, not so much by the inconclusiveness or otherwise of his suggestion as by what he confesses of his feelings concerning the message enshrined in the Quran. He admitted in one place that to him and to like-minded people, (he uses the pronoun "us") the Quran has a "repellent content."[23] In another place he speaks of "our repugnance" being excited by unspecified aspects of Islam.[24] That should be enough reason for him to keep away from the subject. But he was not "repelled" from attempting to translate the *Sirah* into English and to use it, by annotation and other means, to air his prejudices. Since a detailed critique of this translation has already been published[25], there is no need to say more about it here.

A student of Islam who is also a clergyman deserves mention here principally because of his introduction of furher speculation concerning the similarity between Christianity and Islam. "Muslims and Christians," he writes, "have been alienated partly by the fact that both have misunderstood each other's faith by trying to fit it into their own pattern."[26] Like many generalizations, this quotation is not as fair as it sounds. For only Christians have for centuries been attempting to understand, or misunderstand, Islam in Christian terms. The basic Muslim view of Christianity has always been the same because it is part of the

[23] *Ibid.*, 74.

[24] *The Listener* (London, October 16, 1952), 635a.

[25] A. L. Tibawi, "The Life of Muhammad, A Critique of Guillaume's English Translation," *(Islamic Quaterly,* III, No. 3, pp. 196-214).

[26] W. C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, 1957), 17.

divine revelation in the Quran.[27] No believing Muslim ever tried to fit Christianity into any other pattern. The Christian has no such explicit restrictions in his holy books to preclude his acceptance of the Muslim view of Islam, and yet he rejects not only the Muslim view of Christianity but also the Muslim view of Islam, and attempts, moreover, to change both views.

The author of the quotation in the paragraph above is a trained theologian who began his career as a teacher in a missionary institution in Lahore. He used his words as an apology for attempting to achieve at least one of the Christian objectives. For this purpose he argues that it is a common error on the part of Christians and Muslims to suppose that the roles of Jesus Christ in Christianity and Muhammad in Islam are comparable." This statement too is misleading, since such comparison is valid only to Muslims who believe in Jesus as one of God's messengers to mankind. On the other hand Christians in general and Orientalists in particular eitehr do not recognize Muhammad as a prophet or resort to equivocation, as was shown above. Under these

[27] This is a suitable place to evaluate W. C. Smith's lyrical review of K. Cragg's *City of Wrong* (*A Friday in Jerusalem*) published in *The Muslim World,* LI (April, 1961), 134-37. The book is, of course, a translation of the Arabic philosophical novel by Muhammad Kamil Husain, *Qaryatun Zalimah.* The reviewer, even more than the translator, exaggerates the intentions of the novel as a "major move" by a notable Muslim towards the Christian view of Good Friday. H. A. R. Gibb, more soberly, perceived that theology was "irrelevant to the purpose" of the novel, that it upholds all the essential Islamic positions, and that moreover it omits all reference to the Christian symbolism associated with the story. See *Religion in Life,* XXIX (1959-60), 158-9. Equally judicious is Albert Hourani's review which finds that the novel gave "the orthodox Muslim answer" to the two fundamental question: whether Jesus was the Son of God, and whether he was actually crucified. See *Frontier,* II (summer 1960), 129. My own review of the translation and the translator's introduction makes a similar assessment. See *Die Welt des Islams,* VI, Nos. 3-4 (1961), 280-81.

circumstances for whom is the comparison valid? The previous pages will have shown to what extent the study of Islam and of the life of Muhammad is already too complicated by what the Orientalists introduced of controversial, unresolved problems. Far from extricating us from this mess the new comparative hypotheses, if taken seriously, will only get us even more entangled.

The hypotheses are briefly that the role of Muhammad in Islam and that of St. Paul in Christianity "are much more comparable," that the Quran is comparable to the person of Christ, and that the Hadith is comparable to the Bible. More parallels were also suggested.[28] We are not concerned here with what reception these "heresies" might have in Christian theological circles. We are rather interested in the declared objective of their author which is, in his own terms, "communication" or "intercommunciation" between enlightened Muslims and Christians. Are these analogies conducive to this object? Very often honest people are singularly oblivious of the implication of their ideas when confronted with the beliefs, sentiments or prejudices of other people. It is difficult in this case to imagine that the author of the analogies expects them to be welcomed by learned Muslims. Let there be no analogies themselves that are here in question, as it is the pretentious banner, "meaningful and enlightening to Muslims," under which they are paraded.

The realities of verifiable Muslim reaction do not seem to deter or to interest the author. He himself confesses that he offered only one of his analogies to a "liberal" Muslim, a doctor of philosophy from the University of London, who was very

[28] *The World of Islam, Studies in Honour of Philip K. Hitti* (London, 1960), 47-59.

much shocked and had no hesitation in repudiating it. But that did not convince the author. We need not go to Al-Azhar to discover stronger rejection. Three so-called "Westernized" Muslims, noted for their scholarship and liberalism, were consulted separately by the present writer. Each returned much the same answer even though using stronger of milder adjectives: "superficial," "impertinent" and "blasphemous." With whom to "communicate" then, and whom to "enlighten"?

Bold speculation, drawing of parallels and formulation of analogies may be attractive to a professor of comparative religion who understandably must somehow find subjects for comparison. Such imaginative exercises may likewise be interesting to the missionary who may employ the analogies to "soften" the resistance and to open the way. They may also be useful to the non-Muslim teacher in a Western university as a diversion to enliven his task. But as the product of a Christian theological mind couched in Christian terms they are, to say the least, pointless to educated Muslims.[29] The matter is almost like a social conversation; in order to be fruitful it must cover subjects agreeable and interesting to both sides.

With less insight and subtelty, and apparently very little respect for the inteligence of the reader, a former missionary who lectures on Islamic law in the University of London managed to include in a single article almost all the medieval objections to Muhammad and Islam. What is surprising is that he professes in the foreword to provide "factual information," to treat the subject "objectively," to be "scrupulously fair" and to

[29] Cf. Dr. Muhammad al-Bahiy, *Al-Fikr al-Islami al-Hadith wa Silatuhu bi'l-Istimar al-Gharbi* (Cairo, 1376/1957), 181.

avoid "adverse comparison with Christianity."[30] But soon after these professions of objectivity he writes, "there can be no manner of doubt" that Muhammad absorbed his ideas from Talmudic and aprocryphal sources, and that "it seems overwhelmingly probable" that he derived inspiration from Christianity.

The use of language alone may raise doubt concerning the writer's competence to judge, but his actual treatment of the subject as a whole is even more revealing. Muhammad's character is defamed on many counts, but chiefly on the vital matter of his "representing" the Quran as the speech of God while it was not. Islam itself is similarly treated. Thus pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the five pillars, has "no moral uplift," and the whole religion "is at best cold and formal." Like another writer quoted above, he says he is "repelled" by Islam's moral standards.

Whether this measures up to the promised objectivity or not is quite clear. The author is a former Christian missionary writing from that point of view. The "defects" of Islam are judged by Christian, modern European standards. The aim is frankly evangelical. Among the possible developments in Islam in the modern world the writer speculates on the chances of Communism, but evidently hopes for "a turning, on a wholly unprecedented scale, to Christianity which has never yet been adequately presented to the Muslim world." Using some standard missionary arguments he finds that among the obstacles "to the evangelization of Islam" is the law of apostasy and, in recent times, lack

[30] J. N. D. Anderson (ed.), *The World's Religions* (London, 1950). Only the article on Islam (pp. 52-98) is by the editor who also contributes a foreword and an epilogue. The quotations in the text above appear on pp. 7-8, 54, 56, 58, 59 60 (n. 5), 82 (n. 1), 92, 93, 97-98.

of provision in modern codes for a Muslim to change his faith.[31] "The world has yet to see" he concludes lyrically, "what would happen if the Gospel of the living Christ were adequately presented to the millions of Islam."

There is no need to examine this author's professional works. They are on the whole descriptive of contemporary legal practice in a number of Muslim countries. Apart from repeated moral judgment, according to Christian standards, there is a main idea which is soon explained. Far from being an immutable divine law, the *Shariah* has in practice been amended—drastically in recent times. This interpretation obviously takes little account of the history of Islamic law. Because the main origins of the law are the Quran and the Tradition, it has a divine character; because it was partly derived from these and other sources through the exercise of human judgment, it has also a human character. This being so, the law has always been subject to revision from the days of early Islam to the present time.[32]

Consider, for contrast, the approach of the scholar who has made distinct contributions of the study of Islamic law. He does not prejudice his conclusions with an emotional hostility to the background of his subject.[33] Although some Muslim authorities may find his analysis too sceptical and may question his work on points of detail, his main thesis, despite appearance, is not entirely irreconcilable with tradition. For whether according to the traditional view Islamic law was derived, in the first instance,

[31] Cf. J. N. D. Anderson, *Islamic Law in the Modern World* (New York, 1959), 98.

[32] Cf the opening remarks of section (4) below.

[33] J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1950).

from the Quran and the Traditions or, as demonstrated in the thesis in question, was the outcome of sifting and codification by the jurists of existing customary law and administrative practice, the outcome was bound to be the same. To the early Muslim community that outcome was bound to be a legal system in accord with its holy book, traditions and approved practice.

Similar scholarly neutrality is adopted in the approach to contemporary legal practice, with neither moral judgement nor preaching. Modern legislation, concludes a neat survey, must be tested by Islamic standards. To be successful according to these standards modern legislation must, as in the classical period, achieve a synthesis. Neither mechanical reshaping of tradition no secular structure behind an Islamic facade will do. What is required is an "evaluation of modern social life and of modern legal thought from an Islamic angle."[34]

[34] J. Schacht, "Problems of Modern Islamic Legislation" in *Studia Islamica,* XII, 129.

(4)

When the early polemicists indulged in abuse and misrepresentation of Islam their aim was simply destructive. With the introduction of missionary aims, however, a measure of objectiviity was necessary. The method of approach became a mixture ob abuse and demonstration of the "defects" of Islam, but on the basis of more solid facts for the purpose of comparison with Christianity. The first method has now been practically abandoned; the second has either been weakened or clothed in new garments. One of its mild manifestations is the suggestion that Islam must be "reformed." It is not clear who first made the suggestion or used the term "reform" in its Western connotation. But it is abundantly clear that so much nonsense has been written on this subject that it is necessary to discover briefly what it means.

Orientalists, and more particularly those who are Protestant, cannot free themselves from what might be called the inevitability of the reformation. It is perhaps no accident that at present Jewish (and Roman Catholic) scholars seldom take active part in this subject which is almost entirely monopolized by Protestant scholars. Although various contributions touching on the subject of "reformation" in modern Islam have poured from the press, and although there still seems no cessation or abatement of the effusion, stating or restating one or two ideas in different words, genuinely clear and coherent formulation of these ideas has yet to be published. Stripped of its unconscious disguise, the suggestion of "reforming" Islam, if it is an external suggestion, looks

like another attempt to change the Muslim view of Islam, and to render it as near as possible to Christianity, or better still, to the Protestant form of Christianity.

Apart from being a civilization and a culture, Islam has essentially two aspects, the creed and the law. The first is precise and universally comprehensible and is subject to no mutation. The second is partly derived from revelation, partly from the prophetic tradition through the exercise of human judgment. It has therefore been, from the days of the early caliphate down to the present time, subject to interpretation and adjustment through administrative rules, concession to customary law and practice, and, in recent times, through parallel civil legislation. Where do the advocates of "reform" wish to introduce it, and what exactly do they propose to introduce, and for what purpose?

There is no wish to quibble over small details, but it must be clear to anyone with genuine knowledge of Islam that perceptible "reform" cannot be effected in the doctrines of the faith without diminishing or cancelling their validity. It is therefore most unlikely that any Muslim thinker would harbour such designs; still less is it likely that any religious authority would tolerate him if he did. No such authority will countenance, for example, a "restatement" that would accommodate the Christian doctrines of original sin or incarnation to the body of Muslim theology.

As evidence of the muddle concerning "reform" one has only to consider the equiovcal attitude of those non-Muslims who advocate it. On the one hand they allege that Islam is too "rigid" and admits of little change in its system. On the other, when far-reaching changes are made in the application of Islamic law, those same advocates miss no opportunity to point out that such changes undermine the *Shariah*. Surely this a matter which the

Muslim community can judge better. Its two guiding principles have always been that change should be in accordance with the interests (*maslahah*) of the community and the principles of justice (*adl*). There have indeed been protests against even such change, and our own time is no exception. The essential test of validity in our own time is still the old one, the consensus of the community and the approval of the *ulama* in the region concerned. There is good evidence that these authoritative elements have now, as in the past, shown their resilience and tolerance in accommodating the new measures.

The first English-speaking Orientalist to produce a thoughtful contribution on Islam in the modern age, whose ideas continue to provide many followers with texts for expansion, is careful to avoid meddling or patronizing. What the Muslims are doing, or will do, with their systems of beliefs and laws this Orientalist asigns to where it belongs, the *ulama*.[35] Other scholars are not as careful: they boldly proceed from the descriptive survey to the prescriptive "remedy" and even to the prophetic forecast of the future. A stranger to a religious system cannot so easily dispense with elementary courtesy and yet expect to be listened to with respect.

Religious perception is a spiritual, intuitive experience. It cannot be comprehended by analytical or critical methods. Those outside a religious system can never capture the significance of the experience of those inside it.[36] It is a thing which cannot be

[35] H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago, 1947), 122 ; cf. 129.

[36] Cf. P. Ferris, *The Church of England* (London, 1962), as quoted in *The Observer* (October 7, 1962): "...the outsider who asks about the Church is often told he cannot understand it unless he is inside it, even, sometimes, that it is impertinent of him to try."

learned from books. Hence the muddle about the nature and aims of "reform" among its non-Muslim advocates. Hence also the difficulty of those inside the religious community in explaining their religion to those outside who vainly try to appreciate its emotional and intuitive undertones. And yet these simple matters are often overlooked by Orientalists whose knowledge of Islam is derived chiefly from books.

On those rare occasions when they discuss aspects of Islam with learned Muslims, the result is seldom satisfactory. The Muslim takes so much for granted that the Orientalist ends by assuming ignorance in him without justification. Furthermore there is the language difficulty. Very few indeed are the Orientalists who can conduct and sustain a discussion in an Arabic (or Persian or Turkish) that is intelligible to an educated Muslim. Those Muslims who have acquired facility of expression in a European tongue are still at a disadvantage; they can seldom match the Orientalist in borrowing the cultural allusions of that tongue, let alone appropriating and utilizing its classical heritage.

These are some of the obstacles which render suggestions from Orientalists either unwelcome or offensive. While the writer was collecting material for this paper the issues involved were discussed with a number of Orientalists and Muslim and Arab scholars in Europe, America and the Arab world. One example is pertinent to the subject of this section; it is the opinion of a scholar who combines a traditional Muslim education with a training in a Western university. "I have known some Orientalists," he said, "who approach Muslim sholars with an air of superiority and arrogance. When sometimes they ask a question on an Islamic problem, they seem to imply that they know more about it already, whereas they simply have a different point of view with a little real insight."

It was in connection with the subject of "reform" that this remark, somewhat toned down in translation, was made. It must not be supposed, however, that this sort of resentment is caused by superficial social or academic encounters such as are described above. One may even venture to suggest that it does not spring primarily from immediate religious motives. Both the unfortunate history of Islamis studies, which were, in effect, born from polemic and missionary parents, and the legacy of the long military conflict between Christendom and Islam, still play their part, consciously or unconsciously, in determining Muslim attitudes. Of more recent date, and certainly with more bitter taste, is the feeling that the ideas of "reform" came with, or in consequence of, Christian political domination of many parts of the lands of Islam.[37] The early encounter between Islam and Greek thought was a different matter; Islam then ruled supreme, and adopted or rejected foreign elements as a discriminating master. In modern times its discrimination has been, in part at least, sugested, urged or limited by foreign non-Muslim individuals or agencies, acting, as Muslims sometimes suspect, according to the dictates of foreign interests.

This may explain why those "reformists" who had Western inspiration or encouragement never gained a firm hold on the imagination of authoritative Muslim opinion. They have been admired chiefly by Orientalists and their followers. On the other hand, genuinely native reformers, with substantial followings, are frequently branded as mere "reactionaries." Nor were those who chose a midle way, more or less like their predecessors in the golden age, accorded unqualified approval, because, we

[37] Cf. Ahmad Amin, *Yaum al-Islam,* p. 215.

are told, they did not go far enough. But they could not go farther than they did. The *ulama* in all ages possess that collective instinct which indicates to them how far to go, what compromises to accept and where to stand firm in upholding the system. Muhammad Abduh and his disciples were the authors of such a compromise. Neither the extreme "puritanism" of the Wahbahi movement nor the extreme "liberalism" of some Indian Muslims was acceptable to them or to the Muslim community as a whole.

The first essential prerequisite for any successful change (or reform) is therefore native initiative, independent of foreign control or suggestion. The second essential prerequisite is that all change must be aceptable to learned Orthodox authority. Ever since Salim III initiated preliminary innovations in the Ottoman Empire before the end of the eighteenth century, ever since British legal practice in India compelled some Indian Muslim thinkers to adapt the religious law to the realities of non-Muslim sovereignty, the change in the application of Islamic law has continued down to our own time. The rate of change has even been accelerated, or retarded, with the restoration of sovereignty to, or the attainment of independence by, Muslim nations. If protest at the initial change was loud, it was due in no small measure to the fear that the sacred law was not safe under foreign non-Muslim manipulation. If despite the greater change the protest became fainter, it was due partly to the feeling of security under Muslim government and partly to a realistic and accommodating religious authority.

It is therefore incorrect to continue to assert that Islam is too rigid and sanctions no change. Outside the central doctrine of the faith and the postulates of a simple theology, Islam has

undergone revolutionary change in that very department of its system which controls the life of the individual and the community. However, a Christian theologian qualified to be counted as an enlightened missionary or as a missionary Islamist has very recently written:[38] "Islam must either baptize change in its spirit or renounce its own relevance to life." It is difficult to discover what exactly this means. In the light of the discussion in this section, the first part of this statement is clearly untenable, and the second sounds like preaching by an outsider to Muslims on what to do with their religion. Such is the extent of the muddle among the advocates of "reform."[39] Unaware of its implications in detail, they confine themselves to vague generalizations that do not bear examination.

[38] K. Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret* (New York, 1956), 17.

[39] Cf. the equally misleading expression "reform of the religion of Islam" used by C. C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* (Oxford, 1933), 2, 187.

(5)

Most writers on "reform" in Islam are not only vague but also patronizing. In catchy phrases they accuse modern Muslim thinkers of intellectual superficiality and sometimes even of spiritual uncertainty. [40] The previous discussion will have shown to what extent these writers are themselves muddled, both in their understanding of the meaning of "reform" and in their patronizing call to Muslims to "rethink" their tradition. It will have shown also how fair would be a call to these same writers to apply some of their critical faculties to their own handling of evidence and the deduction of conclusions therefrom. It is suggested that some of the confusion is due to a misunderstanding. When an Orientalists speaks of "reformation" he is at least unconsciously making some mental comparison with the events of 1517 in Europe and all that followed therefrom. When, on the other hand, a Muslim writer speaks of *islah* he has no such mental reservations ; he is more likely to mean "restoration" of Islam to what it was in its early days, or "purification" of the practice of Muslims from uauthorized accretions. [41] There

There has been no suggestion in all this of a sectarian or doctrinal "break away" from the classical orthodoxy of Islam.

[40] The words of William Thomson, Harvard Professor Emeritus of Arabic, are quite pertinent here. Deploring lack of sealf-criticism in students of Islam, he asks whether the West has itself resolved the conflicts between religious beliefs and rational science, moral ideals and worldly politics. See R. N. Frye (ed.), *Islam and the West*, 39.

[41] Cf. Muhammad Abduh, *Al-Islam wa'l-Nasranyya* (Manar, 13737 1954), 144-45. See further Muhammad al-Bahiy, *op. cit.*, 373.

This seems to be one of the misconceptions in the mind of a former professor of Arabic in the University of London to whom, of all people, the Qur'an sounds simply like "a jingle." In referring to Muhammad 'Abduh's place in modern Islamic thought the professor wrote: "[He] became the leader of those who felt something was wrong with Islam and yet remained faithful to it."[42] If any coherent meaning could be extracted from this remark it must be that its author assumed its first part to be so true that only one way was open to Muslims: to abjure their faith. Of course, anyone who does not appreciate the Arabic of the Qur'an is not likely to comprend the true nature of Islam or its hold on its adherents. Such remarks, however casually they may be uttered, are calculated to shake confidence in the good faith as well as in the insight of those who make them. Muhammad 'Abduh, of course, never thought or felt that "something was wrong with Islam." To him and to his followers the fault was with Muslims, not Islam.[43] They and not their religion needed *islah.*

A previous warning requires elaboration here. The present contribution is not conceiver as an apology for, or defense of, anythong; it is a plea for clear thinking, and objective standards and courtesy. In the works of Orientalists the term "apologist" has become almost a word of abuse; so also is the term "defense." While the present writer does not entirely subscribe to the ideas

[42] A. S. Tritton: *Islam: Belief and Practices* (London, 1951). 162.

[43] Of the same order is the hypothetical question assumed by G. E. von Grunebaum to issue from modern Muslims: "Was is the theologians of the Middle Ages whose distortion of the prophetic message caused the drying up of the Islamic inspiration?" See R. N. Frye (ed.), *Islam and the West,* 27. The rhetorical form of the question must not be allowed to divert attention from its two erroneous assumptions that there was a "distortion" or "drying up."

and methods of the apologists and defenders[44], he is not blind to the circumstances that called them into existence. It is a dead culture, a dead faith, that does not respond to external, foreign challenge. When in modern times the West launched heavy assaults on Islam in the military, political, economic and cultural spheres, the means of counter-offensive in kind were very limited or non-existent. There was nothing left but defense. If the form this assumed was improvised, if the ideas were sometimes inconsistent, if the methods were frequently crude, there is no wish to excuse anything, but it would be possible, if it were profitable, to explain it all. More important than either is the echo of the process of offense-defense in the modern scene.

It is acknowledged that the early "defenders" were a trifle muddled in their thinking, though as already remarked their muddle is matched by another in the ranks of the other side. If this is so, why should confusion continue to reign in both camps? Perhaps a simple way of answering is by an illustration. The average Arab (and possibly the Muslim in general) would return the greeting *marhaban* at least double if not tenfold. If he is well bred, he may not reply to a discourtesy in the same way. If outraged, however, he is capable of worse. "Outraged" is no exaggerated term to use or the feeling of a believing Muslim who has to listen to, and read of, discourtesies, insults and misrepresentations. Extremes provoke counter-extremes; hence the occasional intoler-

[44] A questionable form of "defense' is a list of quotations favorable to Islam, often lifted out of context, from Western writers some of whom are known "enemies" of Islam. The list is taken so seriously that it is circulated in print by a Muslim preaching centre in England.

ance in Muslim retorts even when written by cultivated and learned people. [45]

When such cultivated and learned Muslims deviate, as they do in the heat of argument or when smarting under an insult, Orientalists are apt to consider the "reponse," but seldom, in equal measure, the "stimulus." It is noteworthy nowadays that those Muslims who respond to the challenge, as their Western admirers expect them to respond, are described as "liberals." But this label is a quickly affixed to them when they appear to make concessions to Western norms as it is quickly removed when they show evidence of "reaction." In both cases the evidence is subjective and the conclusion is hastily made. Those who appeared in early life as "Westernized" but later their own spiritual and intellectual bearing within the native tradition, are branded "reactionaries." But "reactionaries" by whose definition?

Return to the fold is not an experience peculiar to Islam. Nor is religious and intellectual rehabilitation unknown in the West even in these days. In Islam, return to the fold is achieved through the age-old habit of confronting foreign elements in three stages: an initial stage of uncertainty, an intermediate stage of adjustment by selection, and a final stage of assimilation and rejection. What is admitted by the third stage in the Islamic system becomes so thoroughly absorbed that its original character is practically lost. [46] According to this pattern uncertainty is not so certain; it

[45] Cf. the pamphlet entitled *Al-Mubashshirun wa'l-Mustashriqun fi Mawqifihim mina'l-Islam* (Al-Azhar Press, n. d.) by Dr. Muhammad al-Bahiy, former Director-General of Islamic culture at Al-Azhar Mosque, later Administrator of Al-Azhar University and now Minister of Awqaf. See also the Pakistan journal Al-Islam (April, 1958), 129, where Wilfred C. Smith is branded as "the great enemy of Islam."

[46] Cf. H. A. R. Gibb, "La réaction contre la culture occidentale dans le Proche-Orient" in *Cahiers de l'Orient contemporain,* XXIII (Paris,

may be only apparent or transient. A great many of those who fell under Western influence either directly by training in universities or indirectly through personal study, lacked sound traditional education. As was to be expected, some of them suffered from an initial infatuation with novel "philosophies," and in the proces of adjustment and the self-education which it entails, they rediscovered their heritage. The inner struggle which is inseparable from such an experience almost resulted in the reassertion of the spiritual and intellectual values of Islam, even in an exaggerated fashion.

No doubt there are exceptions. But the above paragraph was written not to describe the general run of the so-called educated classes, but with the careers of leading contemporary Arab thinkers or writers in mind. It is fair, in this connection, to call attention to an obvious yet little-noticed aspect of this question of uncertainty. The same Orientalists who point out perplexities among some educated Muslims forget that they themselves had their share in creating them, and in the sphere of Islamic studies that share is considerable. Their Muslim students have for the last generation or two been the product of secular institutions in the West or in the East. Most of them did not receive sufficient training in the religious science. To educate such students in any field of Arabic or Islamic studies in the West poses both academic and moral problems. Inquiries made by the present writer confirm the impression that only the academic aspect of education is taken into consideration.

1951), 7. See further an earlier similar remark by the same author in his article on "The University in the Arab Muslim World" in E. Bradby (ed.), *The University Outside Europe* (Oxford, 1939), 295.

Let us put it very bluntly this way. An Orientalist who, for example, believes that the Qur'an is Muhammad's composition and that he appropriated his ideas from Jewish and Christian sources, and teaches these beliefs to an uninstructed Muslim student is not simply dicharging an academic duty. He is undertaking a moral responsibility, for his teaching may shake the faith of his student in his religion. So uninstructed and uncritical are some of these "advanced" students that they often quote "heretical" views from the books of their teachers and others. Those of them who know better seem to be at first keener on passing examinations and obtaining degrees than on scoring points in argument and risking the antagonism of their teachers.

Hence the violent reaction—the word is used in its usual sense—of some of these students against the education they have received. This reaction is sometimes expressed in crude ways when the students ars still immature, or in positive ways when through later reading and reflection they rediscover themselves and show what may appear to be ingratitude or disrespect of their teachers. Two examples may be quoted here to illustrate two forms of reaction. Students at a wellknown university in the Middle East are reported by their teachers to have resorted lately to tearing out whole pages from Western books, crossing out paragraphs or writing all sorts of retorts when they see in such books what they consider to be offensive to Islam or Arab nationalism. On a smaller scale the writer has seen some books similarly treated in the university libraries at London and Harward.

The other example is perhaps more serious, coming as it does from responsible people who make no secret of their attitude. When in January, 1958, a colloquium on Islamic studies was held

in Lahore, a circular was issued by a committee of citizens to the non-Muslim delegates. The delegates were respectfully but firmly requested "to take care not to injure the feelings of the Muslims of this Islamic country in any way by saying things against Islam, its history, its culture and its law." The committee of the colloquium, states the circular, had accordingly modified and expurgated the papers submitted fo reading by the delegates.

It is easy to find fault in this censorship, and many will rise in arms to defend academic freedom and the unhampered expression of opinion. But even academic methods are known to follow the climate of their times. The world order in the 1960's is surely not that of the 1900's, and international relations, especially between the world of Islam and the West, are conducted on a different level. The significance of the words used in the circular, "injure the feelings," must not escape notice. Surely it is possible for us to seek the truth, to express opinions, to expound theories without giving offense to those who hold different views. All that is required is courtesy, tolerance and moderation towards this other point of view.

There is one more point which deserves to be made before concluding this section. Orientalists are right when they point out that Muslims today pay less attention to rituals and perhaps to ethics. This is a diagnosis which thoughtful Muslims have made, and some have been protesting against it. Indeed a whole book has been written with the question "Are we Muslims?" for a title. [47] But this phenomenon of neglect of religious observance is world-wide and is not peculiar to Islam. Practice is always short of thie ideal, and outright disobedience is not unknown in all

[47] Sayyid Qubt, *Hal Nahnu Mulsimun* (Cairo, 1961).

religious systems throughout the ages. Nor were waverers unknown in the golden age of Islamic society. The *'ulama'* exercise some sort of remote control to prevent public disrespect of the faith, but they seldom use "sanctions:" Yet if it comes to a test, the waverers are sure to be among the first to assert their loyalty to the faith and the community. Whatever happens, Islam remains the strongest force that unites the believers in a bond of a universal brotherhood. [48] Rationalists, agnostics and heretics do indeed exist. But the community is one of orthodox believers in sentiments and emotions, if not always by outward observance.

[48] Cf. H. A. R. Gibb, *The Islamic Near East,* ed. by D. Grant (Toronto, 1960), 180.

(6)

We now turn to consider, from yet another angle, the treatment of contemporary Islam or more particularly of Arab nationalism. While it is realized that most generalizations carry a certain amount of exaggeration, it may nevertheless be safely stated on the basis of personal discussion, if not also on the basis of published works, that some Arabists do not conceal their disapproval (to use a mild term) of the Arab, much the same as most Islamists do not conceal their dislike of Islam. It is no coincidence that some Persian specialists adopt a similar attitude toward Persians, and Turkish specialists toward the Turks. If this diagnosis is substantially correct, then the symptom is a disturbing an element in contemporary affairs as the element of prejudice and hatred in the works of the medieval polemicists. Attitudes may be fostered which would poison the atmosphere of modern studies in the same way that the atmosphere of earlier studies had been poisoned, and for much the same reasons.

It has already been suggested that a student who is not in sympathy with his subject, or is not at least neutral in his approach to it, runs a great risk of consciously or unconsciously doing it less than justice. In general the rational and emotional relationship between the scholar and his subject should at least be analogous to that of a judge in a court of justice in relation to the litigants. The impression one gathers of students of contemporary affairs is that they do not always possess this necessary minimum safeguard against prejudice.

In a sense the attitude of contemporary writers is a legacy of their predecessors parading under a different label: national or ideological antipathy in place of, or even parallel with, religious and doctrinal hatred. When this deplorable situation is carefully considered one finds hatred and prejudice lurking in the most unlikely places and harbored by the least probable minds. To generalize once more, even at the risk of some exaggeration, it is easy to quote chapter and verse to show that when an average Orientalist has any love for, or sympathy with, his subject, it is more often than not for the Arabic (or Persian or Turkish) language and literature, or for a certain Islamic institution. Seldom, if ever, is it for Islam itself. Likewise it is difficult to point out an outstanding Western specialist who has a sympathetic, or at least sufficiently impartial, understanding of Arab nationalism.

Th previous sections will have shown how often in past Islamic studies an assumption was based on another assumption, facts mingled with fallacies. Indeed, assumptions are too often elevated to the dignity of established facts, and fallacies are often implied but never stated. The cumulative effect, through heedless quoting and requoting, is a pile of learning replete with distortions and evasions. It would be vain to hope to distentangle fact from fallacy, still less to correct distortions or to clarify evasions in a snigle esssay. The immediate purpose is rather to sound an alarm that while hitherto such shortcomings were confined to Islamic studies they appear now to have been extended to embrace the so-called studies of Arab nationalism. Had this subject remained within the spheres of the politician and the journalist it would be safe and wise to ignore it. But it has lately attracted the attention of scholars, many of them holding academic posts.

There is a double purpose in sounding an alarm: first, to call

attention to the danger of perpetuating the Western feud with Islam under another label; secondly, to plead with some of the Orientalists, recent converts to "modern studies," to apply to them at least the same degree of scholarship tha thas been applied to medieval studies. It is not too late to consider the whole stituation now. Islamic studies are centuries old, but studies of Arab nationalism, like the subject itself, are only a few decades old.

The trickle of literature that was produced before the First World War became a stream in the period between the wars. Since the 1940's it has become a flood. If the rise and early development of Islamic and Arabic studies in the West was marred by religious hatred and prejudice, the present flood of literature on Arab nationalism in the West is colored, to a great extent, by the political and ideological conflict between the West and the Arab nations which preceded, accompanied and followed their struggle for national independence. This new phase of the conflict between Islam and Christendom has been exacerbated and complicated by the Arab-Zionist feud. Not only has it poisoned the human and political atmosphere of the Middle-East, but has apparently ensnared some scholars in its emotional tangle.

Let us take for example two contributions, not unrelated, by a medievalist turned political commentator. The first is an article in Hebrew purporting to be a new interpretation of Ibn Khaldun, but which seeks in the process to suggest how poor is the estimate of such a distinguished "Arab" of the "Arabs".[49] No one would have been more puzzled by its terms than Ibn Khaldun himself. For surely "Arab patriotism" and "Arab nation" were concepts

[49] D. S. Goitein, *Aravi al aravin* (An Arab of the Arabs) in *The New East* (Quarterly of the Israel Oriental Society), I (1949-1950), 115-121, 198-201.

alien to his language and ideology. But such is the distortion of the language and ideas of the Muslim historian that he was, in effect, cited as a witness of the alleged inferiority of the Arabs. Perhaps the purpose of the writer is more apparent in his second contribution.

He discusses in another work [50] the "contacts" of the Arabs and Jews through the ages, but the point of departure is the creation of the State of Israel, and the arguments troughout, particularly in the last chapter, are colored by this fact. Here are a few examples of instances in which the objectivity of the author may be legitimately questioned. He dwells on the historic Jewish exile but explains away the contemporary Arab exile caused to remedy the first; as if the loss of Palestine were of no importance, he asserts that the Arabs were "the only real winners" after the Second World War; the problems facing the Middle East are to him "social, religious, agricultural, industrial, biological," but he forgets its major *political* problem, Palestine; the Palestine Arab refugees are to him a simple matter of "economic" rehabilitation, though he does not say in what country. [51]

It would be superhuman to expect national and political tensions and conflicts not to influence contemporary studies. The issues are still alive, and many of the writers are in one way or another involved in them, if not on a religious level, then on a national or sentimental level. Hence it is no accident that Western criticisms of Arab nationalism (and perhaps also of Persian and Turkish nationalism) are parallel and similar to those made of Islam, even though they may be expressed in different terms.

[50] *Idem, Jews and Arabs* (New York, 1955).

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 212, 216, 221, 232. See my review of the book in *The Royal Central Asian Journal,* XLIII, pt. 2, 153-4.

Hence also what the Arab (or the Persian on the Turk) makes out of the recent course of his national development is only too often dismissed by Western writers as apologetic, muddled chauvinistic. Very few of these writers seem to realize that they themselves are not free from these human failings.

However, at the root of Western criticism there seems to lurk the same "philosophy" that called for the "reform" of Islam. In both cases there is an unconscious urge to try to fit Islam, and now Arab nationalism, into Christian or, rather, Western moulds: Islam must "reform" on lines similar to those which followed the Reformation in Western Europe; Arab nationalism must emulate the pattern of constitutional democracy that evolved in Western Europe and the United States. Hence the advocates of these measures do not hide their resentment when Islamic and Arab developments do not in practice work out as they expect. Their resentment is often expressed by the capricious use of such terms as "rigid" or "reactionary" with regard to Islam and Arab nationalism respectively.

Those who employ such adjectives are themselves neglectful in liberality. Have they considered that there is another, simpler, and more charitable explanation, already suggested above, of the course of events? After an initial period of bewildered attraction to Western philosophies, political and otherwise, the Muslim world dit not turn "reactionary" in adapting and assimilating what could be adapted and assimilated and in rejecting the rest. It merely reasserted its own identity and in the process cured itself of illusions, through the old Islamic habit of adjustment when confronted with foreign elements. That the Muslim world was disappointed in these philosophies professed in the West is now manifest. To the thoughtful Muslim the very moral bases of these

philosophies again and again have been rudely shaken by the West's own resort to force to establish and sustain their application in dependent, semi-independent and even independent Eastern countries.

Few living Orientalists seem to concede in practice that religious and national movements within the Muslim world must derive the major share of their vitality from native resoucres, and need not follow Western patterns to merit their approval. [52] Their present treatment of Arab nationalism, like the treatment of Islam before it, begins with untenable assumptions. Because the idea of nationalism originated in the West, it must not be assumed that its Islamic or Arab variety should be identical with or even closely similar to the original. There is the native foundation to be built upon, and Arab nationalism, like Islam itself, is bound to transform the foreign element in the process of assimilating it into its system.

Recent preoccupation with "factual" studies has tended to neglect the ideas. There is very little search for principles, patterns and tendencies which are inherent in the native tradition. Furthermore, modern studies are not always fortifed by the same degree of learning that marked earlier studies. Many factors have contributed to this state of affairs. The rapid developmet of studies of contemporary political affairs, particularly in America, the popularity of "surveys," the demand for the "appraisal" essay, the invasion of the preserves of scholarship by journalism, radio and television have all in different ways contributed their share to the lowering of standards and the increase of confusion.

[52] Cf. G. E. von Grunebaum, "Nationalism and Cultural Trends in the Near East." *Studia Islamica,* XIV, 122 "[The West] as *the* principal orientation point for Middle Eastern aspirations, cultural as well as political.'" (Italics are mine.)

Perhaps it is no exaggeration to assert that in the flood of literature produced since the end of the Second World War truly original works of scholarship can be counted on the fingers. A great many of the rest are mere restatements or rearrangements of other works. In addition, summaries of items of current news and ephemeral press articles are gradually but increasingly replacing the use of original documents and original thinking. Footnotes which are principally intended to guide future scholars are increasingly used to prove that an author has read another who has said much the same thing.

In these circumstances it is not surprising to find today's opinions elevated to the dignity of facts tomorrow. What a newspaper reporter said tentatively ten years ago in a hurried moment reappears, now confirmed, by a university teacher, under the imprimatur of a respectable publishing house. The press and other means of publicity in the West are notorious for their neglect of balanced representation of Arab affairs. In a sense these powerful organs of public opinion reflect the ideology of their time, more particularly of their national governments and public institutions. The present writer recently had occasion to listen to highly educated Arabs in Europe, America, and the Middle East who were expressing alarm at a new "crusade" against Arab nationalism which had moved from the popular press to the university lecture hall and the academic publication. [53]

[53] Cf. G. E. Phillips, *The Religions of the World* (London, 1955), 113 : "...some of the feeling of crusading times persists even today." This book, the first in the series "Gateway Handbooks of Religious Knowledge," is intended for schools, colleges and general reading, and is introduced by a general editor writing from the "University of Oxford, Department of Education." It is in fact used as a textbook in a well-

The point has been made above that it is not conducive to human understanding or to "intercommunication" to publish in professedly scholarly works unproven opinions which are offensive to Muslim sentiment. The same could be said about works on Arab politics, particularly in relation to the West. The reason for saying this is that one seldom reads a work on contemporary Arab politics which does not ascribe a measure of foolishness, or something worse, to this Arab politician or that statesman, and with singular inconsistency blame him for abandoning or dismantling the "liberal" heritage of Western tutelage. Those who indulge in such judgment are apt to forget that the liberal heritage was not always freely adopted. Rather it was an alien element introduced in consequence of Western domination which itself was made possible by force. Now that that domination is gone, is it injured pride, and mourning over loss of power, or is it academic disinterestedness that prompts summary judgments in Western writers? Properly played, the game of politics recognizes no permanent enemies, and accordingly Western und Eastern politicians do often forget the past. Why not some scholars?

known English school. General history textbooks in schools, colleges and indeed universities are, of course, still disfigured by abusive remarks about "Mahomet" and the "Saracens"—a subject which deserves separate and detailed treatment.

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When General Allenby captured Jerusalem in 1917, he is reported to have said: "Today ended the Crusades." This boastful statement, if authentic, was ill-suited for the occasion, for Allenby's army contained many Indian Muslim soldiers and his flank to the east of the River Jordan was wholly composed of an Arab army under Faisal, son of the Sharif of Mecca. [54] But authentic or not, the phrase has stuck in Arab memory ever since. In the last but one paragraph of the preceding section we alluded to educated Arabs who were alarmed by a new "crusade"—the hostile treatment of Islam and Arab nationalism in contemporary Western literature. Enough has been written above to illustrate where precisely in the treatment of Islam there is legitimate cause for such a complaint. Now it is proposed to illustrate briefly the grounds for complaint in respect of the treatment of Arab nationalism.

Whatever native and foreign students may make of Arab nationalism, it seems, despite all appearances, to be still inseparable from Islam, if not considered one if its manifestations, in the modern world. It is partly because of this feeling of identity between the two that the fear of a new "crusade" is taken seriously. What is hostile to Arab nationalism is then automatically hostile to Islam, and vice versa. If this is so, the risks which a scholar holding an academic post runs in attempting an "appraisal" of

[54] Cf. A. P. Wavell (Later Field Marshal), *The Palestine Campaigns* (3rd ed. London, 1940), 199, 203.

this or that aspect of Arab nationalism are many. But the most obvious risk is in the occasional article, the radio talk or interview, and the gratuitous letter to the press. These are generally produced hastily, or under the emotional strain of a crisis, and are therefore seldom judicious.

Many highly educated Arabs still complain that the non-Jewish and non-Zionist Orientalists, especially the Arabists among them, kept silent and made no protest, at least on humanitarian grounds, against the fate of Palestine and its Arab population. A well-known Muslim writer maintains that the wresting of Palestine from the hands of its native population and the handing of it to the Jews was due to the old Christian hatred of Islam. [55]

A young professor in a Middle Eastern university, himself educated in a leading English university, used equally strong language in recalling, in a conversation with the writer, a letter written to *The Times* in January, 1952, by the then Professor of Arabic in the University of London. The letter was published during a crisis in Anglo-Egyptian relations, and the writer gave his official, not private, address and signed as "Professor of Arabic, University of London." [56] He did not confine himself to a proper expression of sympathy with the British teachers and officials dismissed by the Egyptian government (the ostensible purpose of the letter), but took the occasion to air once more his prejudices against Islam. Arguing that it was contrary to the Qur'an for Egypt to repudiate the agreement with Britain, he wrote: "Such behaviour can only discredit the religion that they

[55] Ahmad Amin, *Yawm al-Islam,* 107; Cf. A. Hourani, "The Decline of the West in the Middle East" in *International Affairs,* XXIX, (1953), 32.

[56] *The Times,* 29 January 1952, p. 8, col. 5, letter by A Guillaume.

(i.e. the religious leaders in Al-Azhar) fain would have the world respect."

What cause this letter was supposed to serve at the time is now of no consequence. It is there on record to underline the current allegation in the Arab world that some Orientalists meddle in politics, while others act as advisers to their governments and therefore must be partly responsible for policy. A specialist Orientalist is of course the right person to appoint on a commission charged with investigating a matter within his speciality, and it would be fit and proper for him to serve as a member. But such a specialist may seriously compromise his moral independence if, in consequence of *secret* advice, his government takes action of questionable moral validity. Let us take an imaginary example. Suppose that in 1956 Anthony Eden saw fit to consult an Islamist or Arabist concerning the implications of the decision to attack Egypt. What advice could this specialist have given within the bounds of morality and national interests?

Such a dilemma does (or should) face some scholars, not so much in the hypothetical situation just mentioned as in their everyday lectures and in their published works, though the scholars meant here are the new Middle East specialists and not as a rule the old Orientalists. The main pitfalls attending contemporary Middle Eastern studies seem to be the following, not mutually exclusive, matters: First, irritation at the retreat of "liberalism" in the political life of the states newly freed from Western tutelage. Second, the fear that the Middle East may turn communist through internal or external agencies. Third, the concern, by no means confined to Zionist or Jewish writers, shown for the present welfare and future prosperity of Israel. Fourth, anxiety over the oil resources and free passage of oil to the West.

Fifth, the tendency to belittle the antecedents, rise and achievements of Arab nationalism. Except perhaps for oil as a commercial commodity, the treatment of all these matters is very seldom objective, quite often partisan, and almost always charged with emotions. This attitude seems to be partly inspired by psychological disappointment at the decline and fall of the West in the Middle East and partly by the Arab-Zionist conflict.

Much of what has been written on these themes since the end of the Second World War either has been falsified by the course of events, or has proved mutually irreconcilable, the whole with its component parts. To be sure, there remains a respectable residue of sound scholarship. For the purpose of the subject of this section, however, a brief word is necessary on the treatment of these five themes by newer scholars who are not strictly Orientalists in the usual sense. Take "liberalism" first. Such Western liberalism in politics and government systems as may have been tried in the Middle East between the two wars was of course adopted, as already remarked, through Western dictation and not through organic development from a native foundation. Most of the trials and errors of its application were made under the watchful eye of the West. Nevertheless it was clear towards the end of Western oversight that the various political structures were already tottering. Their general collapse sooner or later after national independence was perhaps inevitable.

A Western scholar may be tempted to measure these development by Western standards or prejudices. If he does so his work may well be colored by mourning the loss of power on the one hand and passing moral jugdment on the other. It is much the same old story of trying to understand Islam in Christian terms. Herein lies the danger, on the academic as well as the moral level,

of tackling these subjects in the lecture hall and on the printed page. [57]

Communism provides an attractive subject of speculation, not only with regard to its theoretical compatibility with Islam, but also to the means by which this or that Middle Eastern country, or indeed the entire area, was about to turn communist. The excitement reached a great pitch in 1955-57, but has since died down. If one re-reads what was said at the time and tests it by what has actually happened since then he will learn one thing: to distrust some works parading under academic labels but disguising ideological or other prejudices. A book published a few months after Egypt had concluded an arms deal with Czechosovakia contains a thesis running through it that Islam is no bulwark against communism and that Egypt's action opened the way for an imminent triumph of communism in the Middle East. [58] Neither part of the thesis was proved, and none of its forecasts came true. [59] Speculation by this writer and others has accordingly been muted — at least for the time being.

[57] Cf. G. Kirk, *A Short History of the Middle East* (London, 1959 ed.) ch. X. This chapter added to a deservedly popular work reads as if it were by another author. In tone, language and comment it is less distinguished by insight than the rest of the book written about a decade earlier. The author has gone to even more extremes in his more recent work. *Contempory Arab Politics* (London, 1962). See my review of this book in *Royal Central Asian Journal*, XLIX, pts. 3 and 4, pp. 352-53.

[58] W. Z. Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East* (London, 1956), 268-70, 284 *et passim*. Two years later, even when the forecasts concerning Egypt and Syria proved false, the same writer was still making similar assessments which have since been falsified by actual events. See his article "Syria: Nationalism and Communism" in a collection of articles by several writers which he edited under the title of *The Middle East in Transition* (London, 1958), pp. 325-36, specially pp. 330, 335.

[59] According to A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers* (London, 1957), 46, Karl Marx held that the Ottoman Empire was the one country which might pass into socialism without experiencing capitalism. Considered in

Western concern for Israel is mostly partisan. While this is understandable, though academically objectionable, in a Zionist or Jewish writer,[60] it is difficult to account for it in more independent writers. In the voluminous literature in English alone the portion of objective treatment, compared with open or concealed propaganda, is very small indeed. The latter is particularly objectionable in books issued under respectable academic auspices.[61] But a great many Western writers who are neither Zionists nor Jewish adopt a similar attitude. They seem to be either too unwilling to exert themselves to disentangle fact from fiction and exercise their own judgment, or they are sentimentally committed to support a community much more Westernized in thought and technique and hence more akin to them than the Arabs. If this is so, it provides some justification for the Middle

the light of the recent history of successor states this prophecy has not proved altogether false. Socialism, not communism, is the political and economic philosophy that has been gaining ground in the Middle East.

[60] Cf. J. C. Hurewitz, "The Minorities in the Political Process" in S. N. Fisher (ed.), *Social Forces in the Middle East* (Cornell, 1955), 216-17. "Israel nationalism," he says, "is Jewish nationalism... [since] Judaism permeates the national way of life." Hence, he remarks, the Arabs in Israel must either accept this way of life or face the prospect of remaining second-class citizens. See my review of the book and article in *The Islamis Quaterly,* III, No. 1, pp. 67-70. In an earlier work J. C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York, 1950), made an attempt to be fair, but the last two chapters show him to be less impartial than in the others.

[61] See, for example, B. Halpern, *The Idea of the Jewish State* (Harvard, 1961). On six different matters chosen at random from the index this author betrays his partisan approach. Here is, as an illustration, his veiled reference to the massacre by Jewish terrorists of the men, women, and children of an Arab village situated in the midst of Jewish-inhabited areas outside Jerusalem: "...capture of the village of Dair Yasin was accompanied by such wanton bloodshed" (p. 391). "Capture" rules out the cold-blooded murder of civilians.

Eastern contention that Israel is a Western bridgehead, another form of Western "imperialism" or "colonialism," a last evidence of lost power, a vague Western hope for the future.

Western anxiety over the oil resources of the Middle East is twofold, especially in the postwar period which witnessed the withdrawal of Western power. On the one hand it is connected with the Western fear of communism and Soviet domination of the area; on the other it is prompted by Western distrust of those who rose to power in the Middle East after the end of Western domination. First came the Anglo-Iranian crisis and later, on a much larger scale, the Suez crisis. While the former was eventually settled on terms not unfavorable to the West, settlement of the latter was in effect a humiliating defeat which did not, however, result in hampering the free passage of oil to the West. Much has been written especially on the Suez crisis and its aftermath.[62] Among the emotional outbursts was a forecast that Arab nationalism was drifting towards Russia, a drift which economic aid could not check. "It can only be checked by the West displaying a will and determination stronger than that of the USSR, so as to recapture the respect that has been surrendered piecemeal.[63]

This is not a call for the British lion to roar; it roared, perhaps for the last time, at Suez with disastrous results. The call is rather for America to take the "imperial heritage" of Great Britain and France, no longer capable of carrying the white man's burden. The aim is professedly "to recapture the respect" of the Middle East, to forestall Russia, and in short to employ force. One of the assumptions behind such wishful thinking is condemnation of

[62] The most judicious is a "Penguin Special" by G. Wint and P. Calvacoressi, *Middle East Crisis* (1957).

[63] G. Kirk, *A Short History of the Middle East,* 304.

national developments in the Middle East since the beginning of Western retirement, and disapproval of the soundness of the foundations of Arab nationalism.

Such indeed is the tenor of a whole book whose author spared no effort by his selection and treatment of the facts to achieve this end. [64] Among other things the book seeks to give a novel interpretation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the MacMahon-Husain Correspondence, and in consequence to question the motives, developement and outcome of the Arab Revolt. Perhaps the strangest of this author's numerous assertions is the bestowal of a moral halo on the Agreement. [65] Many students of modern history, not endowed with such peculiar powers of perception, will disagree if only because the signatories themselves (to say nothing of their enemies or the victims of the Agreement) did not see it in this light when the Bolsheviks made its secret terms public.

These topics, as well as others not mentioned above, have recently provided means of easy and quick recognition for English-speaking scholars, particularly in the U.S.A., and mainly in departments of politics and government. Lacking on the whole the firm grasp on the indispensable background of Arabic and Islamic studies which the conventional Orientalists no doubt possess, the new "specialists" tend sometimes to produce either slipshod or partisan work on contemporary affairs. Perhaps this is a natural result of a tendency to neglect Islam and Islamic

[64] E. Kedourie, *England and the Middle East* (London, 1956). See the next note.

[65] For a discussion of this and other assertions, inconsistencies and suppressions, etc., see my review of the books in *The Islamic Quarterly*, IV, Nos. 1-2, 90-92.

civilization in favor of the vague notion of the Middle East, to attempt to understand the child without first studying its inheritance. Hence "Islamists" are a mere handful, while the Middle East "specialists" are legion.

Apart from a good number of convinced Zionists, there are among the new specialists in the U.S.A. a few who are of Middle Eastern extraction. Some of the latter, however, are finding it very hard to reconcile academic freedom with the prejudices of certain vested interests. Two of them have bitterly complained, in conversation with the writer, of subtle pressure and even victimization. Let us hope that these complaints are exaggerated, for if substantially justified they may lead to grave consequences. Expediency may dictate concessions, and concessions in such matters are incompatible with personal integrity and academic freedom.

(8)

In dealing with subjects within its purview, orientalism has on the whole failed to come to terms with Islamic thought and methods, partly because it neglected to train and retain in the West Arabic and Islamic recruits. The early training of Maronite scholars, though retsricted in scope and purpose, is an obvious exception. There are certain other exceptions in British and American universities. The observations made in the concluding sentences of the previous section do not apply to these exceptional cases. They prefer principally to a few recruits made in the United States since the end of the Second World War.

If a trickle of such Middle Eastern scholars has at long last been admitted into English and, on a larger scale, American universities, that development should be welcomed as an overdue corrective to past neglect. Whether by chance or design, the new measure should be given a fair scope to bear fruit in an atmosphere of absolute academic freedom. However, the fears expressed above concerning the situation in certain American universities do not seem to be entirely without foundation. If these fears are well-founded then the value of the admission of Middle Eastern scholars will be greatly diminished or even nullified. The danger lies in an intellectual capitulation which may produce scholars aping the methods, and reconciled to the prejudices, of the environment. In that case the treatment of Islam and Arab nationalism—and indeed other nationalisms in the Middle East— will continue more or less on the lines described in this essay.

But there is no intention of concluding on this gloomy note. Frequent pleas have been made in this essay for scholars to show, within the bounds of scholarship, more concern for human relations, mors sympathy in handling controversial subjects and more courtesy in the use of language. None will be found who will not subscribe to these principles in the abstract; few however do observe them in practice. For my own part I make no apology for this critique. Scholars must expect to be taken seriously. Among those criticized above are friends, some of whom were informed of my criticism in advance. It is gratifying to find that they take criticism in the spirit in which it is made. It is hoped that they, and the others who were not informed, will give to this essay some of the attention with which I have studied their works.

This essay will have been written in vain if its lines, and the reasons that prompted it, are not recognized as justified at least in principle. The matters raised very briefly are much too serious to be ignored indefinitely, with the double risk of widening the area of controversy and increasing cultural estrangement. It is the writer's hope therefore that the points raised will find enough support for their adoption as a basis for discussion somewhere at a meeting of a learned society or at a seminar in a department of Oriental studies. At the same time he welcomes individual comments from all concerned, as he hopes to revise and expand the essay with a view to publication in book form.